



State of Connecticut

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Testimony
Public Health Committee
SB 434 An Act Concerning Food & Beverage Service In Funeral Homes
March 14, 2013

Good morning Co-Chairs Senator Gerrantana and Representative Johnson, Vice-Chairs Senator Slossberg and Representative Miller and Ranking Members Senator Welch and Representative Srinivason and members of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Representative Janice Giegler and I am here to submit testimony on **SB 434 An Act Concerning Food & Beverage Service in Funeral Homes.**

During the 2013 Legislative Session, the Task Force on the Provision of Beverages and Food In Funeral Homes was established by the General Assembly through Public Act 13-305 to study the provision of beverages and prepackaged food at arrangement services in funeral homes since current regulation (Sec. 20-211-28) prohibits funeral homes from serving food and beverages in connection with funeral services. This Task Force which was comprised of five representatives of the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association whose membership consists of 220 Connecticut funeral homes of which 27 are corporately owned and 193 being primarily family owned and operated; two representatives of the Service Corporation International, Inc. who is licensed in the state representing 19 funeral homes; two members of the Connecticut State Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors who oversees 300 funeral homes within the State, and the Commissioner of Public Health's designee, the coordinator of the Food Protection Program in the Environmental Health Section met this Fall to gather information and make its recommendations. Although this Public Act did not include the participation of members of the General Assembly, 3 legislators including myself attended their meetings and public hearing. As a former member of the Public Health Committee and one who has introduced a number of bills related to the funeral industry, I was interested in this provision and the impact it might have on those homes which are essentially a small business.

During the course of the meetings and during the public hearing, it became clear that the establishing food service in funeral home establishments was not a simple issue. Concerns such as defining whether events at funeral homes were "public or private"; permits and additional licenses would need to be obtained; were kitchen facilities available; funeral home employees may need to be qualified food handlers depending on the Class of food served; there may be a fiscal note to towns and municipalities for Health inspectors after hours and local zoning and building departments, fire marshals and other municipal departments may have other requirements were some of the issues expressed by the Directors of Health. Surveys conducted showed a majority of funeral homes opposed to serving food and beverages with numbers seemingly reflexing those who own renovated old homes where space is at a premium vs those corporately owned facilities which are newer and have kitchens for enhanced catering facilities or in fact have a separate catering facility.

I appreciate having the opportunity to offer testimony and respectfully request that you give favorable consideration to move this bill forward with the recommendations of the Task Force on the Provision of Beverages and Food In Funeral Home specifying commercially prepackages food and non-alcoholic beverages which would fall under Class 1 food service during pre-arrangement and arrangement services which would not impact the operation of the majority of Connecticut's funeral establishments.

Respectfully submitted,

State Representative Janice R. Giegler